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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 5167
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 7359
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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2341
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7498
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9585
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2319
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3422
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002843

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[11.](#) Mideast

[12.](#) Iran

Key stories in the media:

Leading media reported that yesterday Hamas denied a report by Al Arabiya-TV that claimed that the movement's leadership has rejected the latest offer presented by a German mediator regarding Gilad

Shalit release. Maariv and Israel Radio quoted Hamas officials as saying on the movement's official Web site that Israel refuses to free Fatah's Marwan Barghouti, the PFLP's Ahmed Saadat, and Hamas leaders Ibrahim Hamad and Abdullah Barghouti. Major media reported that a senior Hamas official threatened to kidnap other Israelis.

Leading media printed an AP report that Iran is close to clinching a deal to clandestinely import 1,350 tons of purified uranium ore from Kazakhstan. Israel Radio noted that, in an interview with the radio last week, Kazakh Ambassador to Israel Galim Orazbakov pledged that his country would not aid the Iranian nuclear program.

Kadima Knesset Member Shaul Mofaz was quoted as saying in an interview with HaQaretz that the election of Tzipi Livni as his party's leader bordered on criminal. Mofaz claimed that Livni cannot be a prime minister or lead.

The media reported that yesterday PM Benjamin Netanyahu met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and other senior Egyptian officials to discuss renewing Mideast peace talks. Afterward, Egyptian FM Ahmed Abu al-Gheit offered rare praise for Netanyahu, commending him for raising various new ideas for advancing the peace process. Abu al-Gheit did not offer details of Mubarak's discussion with Netanyahu at Cairo's Presidential Palace, but said he is convinced the Israeli leader is serious about resuming talks with the Palestinians. Yediot reported that Mubarak will invite PA President Mahmoud Abbas to Cairo in order to make the Palestinians resume the negotiations. Maariv cited the hopes of diplomats that a diplomatic summit will take place in Egypt to relaunch the negotiations.

HaQaretz reported that Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee yesterday that Israel's declared freeze of construction in the settlements will not bring the Palestinians to the negotiating table by itself. "As far as the Palestinians are concerned, the decision of the government to freeze construction does not constitute the basis for restarting the political process, for there to be a basis there also needs to be an Israeli statement on Jerusalem," Diskin was quoted as saying that there is a crisis in confidence between the PA, Israel, and the U.S., because the Palestinians believe Washington could force Israel to undertake substantive steps in confidence building.

Israel Radio and other media reported that Netanyahu received a warm welcome from a Likud gathering upon his return from Egypt despite the settlement building freeze.

Maariv reported on increased security around DM Ehud Barak. The newspaper quoted a defense source as saying that there are concerns for Barak's life in the wake of the settlement construction freeze.

Yediot quoted an Israeli intelligence source as saying that Yemen has turned into the new capital of terror. Maariv reported on increasing calls in the U.S. to introduce Israeli-style security at airports.

Major media reported that yesterday the High Court of Justice revoked the ban on Palestinians traveling or walking on Route 443 (the eastern segment of the northern Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road), ruling it was unauthorized and disproportional. The court ordered the route to be reopened to all within five months' time. The restrictions on Palestinian movement set by the Israel defense establishment stemmed from the fact that the road had become a security Achilles heel and a target for terrorist attacks, which over the years have claimed lives. However, Supreme Court Justice Dorit Beinisch refused to term the previous situation apartheid.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted moderate Deputy PM and Intelligence Affairs Minister Dan Meridor (Likud) as saying yesterday at a conference of ambassadors being hosted by the Foreign Ministry that the Palestinian issue currently appears to be insoluble and that he is skeptical about whether the Palestinians were prepared at all to reach a solution at present.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday, in an interview with the newspaper, Anti-Defamation League National (U.S.) Director Abe Foxman slammed the U.S. administration for what he called its Omischievous and troubling decision to seek clarification from Israel over last Saturday's IDF operation in Nablus. Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Michael Oren, said that the request for

clarification came from the White House and that it was understandable. Q Foxman told The Jerusalem Post, however, that while the U.S. was a welcome and often necessary intermediary in peace efforts, Qthis is something new. This is America getting involved in combat situations.

HaQaretz quoted Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt as saying yesterday in an interview with Nazareth-based Radio A-Shams that Israeli Druze should not serve in the IDF, saying such service clashes with Druze membership in the Arab nation. Jumblatt said that all Druze are Arabs who follow the Druze religion, and thus ties between Druze in different countries and between Druze and other Arabs were only natural.

Andrew Standley, the new E.U. Ambassador to Israel, was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that European funding of NGOs does not constitute QmeddlingQ in public policy.

Leading media reported that yesterday President Mubarak acceded to PM Netanyahu's request to allow hundreds of Jewish pilgrims to visit the tomb of Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzeira near Alexandria at the end of next week. Citing security concerns, Egyptian authorities had initially refused to allow a traditional hilula, or remembrance ceremony held on the anniversary of a revered rabbi's death, to take place at the tomb.

Leading media quoted Qatom spyQ Mordechai Vanunu, whom the police accuses of violating his parole, as saying that the only purpose of his meeting with Norwegian Bible Professor Kristin Joachimsen earlier this week was a date.

Maariv reported that FM Avigdor Lieberman is pressing for recognition of Evangelical Christians that would result in easier entry into Israel, the authority to establish special tribunals, and receiving funding from the government. The newspaper says that Interior Minister Eli Yishai (Shas), who fears missionary activity, objects to the proposed move.

Leading media reported that last night the Tel Aviv Municipality held the awards ceremony for the 2009 Sokolow Prize for Journalism. Both awards for print journalism went to writers for HaQaretz: Zvi Bar'el and Yossi Melman. David Witzthum of Israel TV and Omri Asenheim of Channel 2-TV also received prizes.

II. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

II. QTerms of Reference

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/30): QThe [Obama] administration, after a year of driving down the wrong road, is now back to where the Bush II White House had constructively left matters -- meaning that there can be no return to the 1949 Armistice Lines, and that agreement hinges on land swaps, on Israel's retention of strategic settlement blocs and on the Palestinians accepting the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. Talks can resume as soon as Abbas drops his prerequisite demand for a total settlement freeze everywhere over the Green Line.

An administration that wants a breakthrough peace agreement in 2010 might also want to rethink its own terms of reference. Here are some suggestions: the less the U.S. says about construction in Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem the better.... The administration now needs to take on board that the settlement issue is a red-herring. The sooner the administration incorporates the concept of a demilitarized QPalestineQ into its peacemaking, the faster progress can be made. A workable mechanism for Israeli and international oversight of crossing points between the West Bank and Jordan is equally essential. There can be no QrightQ of Palestinians refugees and their descendants to QreturnQ to Israel proper. One final suggested term of reference: the administration's Iran policy is the peacemaking lynchpin. The quicker the mullahs are defanged, and Hamas and Hizbullah deflated, the sooner moderate Arab elements may be willing to take chances for peace.... The more [the President] leans on Iran, the closer the region gets to

peace.

II. They Don't Believe Him

The independent, left-leaning *Ha'aretz* editorialized (12/30): QIn his talks with [Kadima party leader Tzipi] Livni, Netanyahu asked her why no one seems to believe his stated intention of advancing the peace process with the Palestinians. The answer to his question is clear. His decisions and actions raise doubts about his desire to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Netanyahu is superb at equivocating. He halted new residential construction in the settlements and then added settlements to the list of national priority areas. He promised that the Qtime is ripe to renew the peace processQ and went to Cairo to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and at the same time issued public tenders for hundreds of new apartments in East Jerusalem. How is it possible to take his call to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to return to the negotiating table seriously when Israel is tightening its hold on the disputed city?.... If Netanyahu wants people to believe him, he has to convince them that he is committed to advancing the peace process, with no tricks and no gestures aimed at compensating the settlers. Only after he proposes a new path and demonstrates willingness to confront the right over it will it make sense to shore up the coalition from the left.

III. QMilestone in the Right Direction

Legal commentator Boaz Okun, who was Director of IsraelQs Courts from 2004 to 2006, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist *Yediot Aharonot* (12/30): QTodayQs apartheid no longer comes in an outspoken wrapping, which explicitly declares superiority or oppression. It lurks beneath the surface, and crawls slowly and cunningly to the surface, with all the prejudices sprouting next to it, and it is already permissible to speak about someone who Qlooks like an Arabush [derogatory term for an Arab]Q or explain where prostitutes come from. Route 443 is just one example of the practices employed in the territories, which are part of a systematic and declared policy of applying one law to Jews and another to Arabs. This is not related to the war on terror, it is related to the policy that prefers the Jewish interests in the territories in the areas of water, lands and so on. No one likes to hear that our state is almost like South Africa or becoming like it. Nevertheless, we should beware. Apartheid states are created slowly and tend to collapse all at once. When they do so, it happens without advance signs, like ... marionettes whose strings are suddenly cut.

IV. QIsraelis Who Care for Palestinian Prisoners

The nationalist, Orthodox *Makor Rishon-Hatzofe* editorialized (12/30): QToo many Israelis -- those who call for the conclusion of the Shalit deal and the acceptance of HamasQ conditions -- do not view the release of the terrorists as a bad thing at all. As a matter of fact, they supported the release of terrorists in the past and will support such actions in the future not only in exchange for GiladQs release but also for free.... It is not by chance that the same people who appear to be prepared to pay dangerous prices in order to release Shalit are not willing to pay the lightest cost in Israeli-U.S. relations in order to promote the release of one Israeli -- Jonathan Pollard (there is no symmetry here: activists for PollardQs release will not push forward a deal to free terrorists in exchange for him, in the same way most of them object to the emerging Shalit deal).

12. Iran:

Block Quotes:

QWanted: a Responsible Adult

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning *Ha'aretz* (12/30): QIt must be stated plainly: Israel does not have independent strike capability against Iran -- not in the broad sense of the term.... It is doubtful whether Israel can allow itself to act against the wishes of the United States -- to stand alone against an Iranian response and begin an open-ended

operation against a nation of 70 million people.... Over the past year, the Obama administration has provided the world with ample reason to criticize it for its naivete, its overblown confidence in the power of the spoken word to tear down walls, and its impotence on North Korea. On the Iranian front, however, it has acted exactly as it should. Its pursuit of dialogue has pushed Tehran into an uncomfortable corner, created unanticipated common ground between the U.S. and Russia, and could even lead to harsh sanctions against Iran. What Israel needs now is a responsible adult, one who knows how to pull the emergency lever should the need arise. If such an adult cannot be found in Jerusalem, we must hope there is one sitting in the White House.

CUNNINGHAM